

# Belz best known for helping start Camas volunteer fire service

**Long-time community volunteer stayed active most of his 98 years**

The last of the three musketeers has died.

Lonnie Belz, 98, died June 18 at the Fort Vancouver Convalescent Center in Vancouver.

Belz, an active community volunteer, was a member of the trustees of Camas United Methodist Church. He and the late Mike Brunner and Casey O'Dell were known as the three musketeers at the church, doing whatever was needed, usually together.

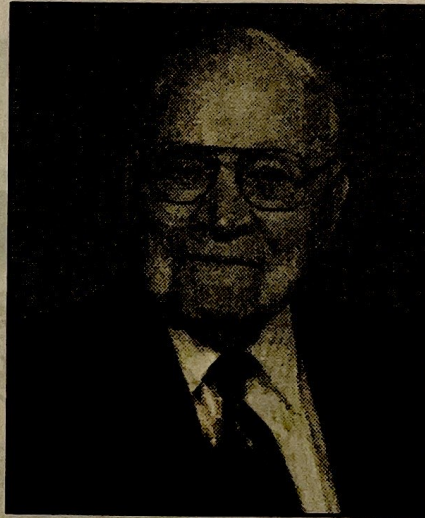
Next to his church, Belz was perhaps best known for working to develop the first volunteer fire department in Camas.

Belz, interviewed by the Post-Record in 1993, said he became involved in creation of the volunteer fire department after fire damaged several Camas buildings in 1923. He helped recruit others, including members of the paper mill fire department, to volunteer their time. In 1928, he and a few others went to fire school and learned some of the finer points of fighting blazes. He served as assistant chief in 1930, but moved from the city and had to quit the department.

"I never wanted to be a fireman, but I got mixed up in it trying to help the community," Belz told the Post-Record.

Belz also helped build Camas' J.D. Curry Youth Camp, served for more than 40 years on the Camas Cemetery Board and was an active member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Bennett-Barnett Post 27 of the American Legion in Camas. When asked during the 1993 interview why he was so active, Belz responded, "If something needs to be done, I just do it."

He was born April 8, 1898, in Grundy County, Iowa. In 1902, at the age of 4, he moved with his parents to Camas from Cedar Falls, Iowa. He at-



**LONNIE BELZ**

tended Camas High School, served in the Army during World War I, and went to work at the mill to help support the family.

When Belz went to work at the mill it was called Crown Columbia. He saw the transition from its original name to Crown Willamette and then Crown Zellerbach (now known as James River Corp.). Belz was a specialized machinist and did roll grinding during his 48-1/2 year career. After retiring on May 1, 1963, Belz continued to work by doing consulting for an additional 10 years. His specialty resulted in him being sent to mills throughout the United States and around the world, including South Africa, Holland and Chili.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Lovday, in 1973. Belz is survived by his daughter, Genevieve Lindgren of Vancouver; sons, Lloyd Belz of Nuku'alofa, Tonga, and Edward Belz of Portland; brother, Albert Belz of Vista, Calif.; 12 grandchildren; and 28 great-grandchildren.

A graveside service was held Monday at Camas Cemetery, followed by a memorial service at Straub's Funeral Home in Camas.

The family suggests remembrances be made to Camas United Methodist Church.